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Supporting Resource Equity for Oregon's Home Visiting Workforce: Exploring Racial, Ethnic & Linguistic Differences

Oregon's 2023 Home Visiting Workforce Survey: Learning Brief 1

Background & Importance

Prenatal and early childhood home visiting is an effective strategy for promoting positive birth outcomes, improving family well-being and preventing child abuse and neglect.

One key to successful services is having a strong, well-supported home visiting workforce. But in Oregon and nationally, this critical workforce is facing a crisis as programs struggle to hire and retain skilled home visitors and workers experience low pay, difficult working conditions and high job stress.

Home visitors of color—those whose lived experience and background reflect the cultural, racial and linguistic diversity of so many Oregon families—cope with compounding stressors related to structural racism, bias and documented pay inequities.¹

This learning brief is the first in a series to share findings from a 2023 statewide survey of Oregon's home visiting workforce. This study has provided a wealth of information about this workforce and how to improve and support its well-being and retention, with a focus on the needs and experiences of home visitors of color and those who speak languages other than English.

The workforce survey was co-created using a data equity framework by the Workforce Equity Research Leadership team (WERL) comprising 11 home visitors, supervisors and a program manager, the majority of whom identify as persons of color. The WERL continues to meet with the PSU research team to interpret key findings and develop recommendations for organizational, programmatic and policy changes to improve the well-being and retention of home visitors in Oregon.

■
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This study was done in partnership with the MIECHV Program team at Maternal and Child Health, Oregon Health Authority; and the Workforce Equity Research Leadership team: Adejoke Babatunde, Jonathan Badillo, Mariana Bonham, Christina Causey, Kristen Corbin, Mae Chao, Marisol De La Cruz Monroy, Devynne Heckman, Denise Hernandez, Amy Lovelace, Evelyn Luna-Lozano, Pam Richardson and Jin Song.



About Learning Brief 1

This learning brief focuses on racial/ethnic and linguistic differences in home visitor pay, benefits and access to professional development. These essential tangible resources impact the well-being of home visitors and their families, including their physical, mental and economic health. The WERL and PSU teams worked together to analyze data and identify findings that can inform policy and programmatic changes to reduce these disparities and ensure that all home visitors are well-paid and have access to the benefits they need to thrive in the workplace.

Survey Participant Characteristics

This brief provides information only about home visitors; program managers and supervisors were not included. A total of 494 home visitors responded to the survey.

Survey respondents were able to select more than one racial/ethnic identity and language spoken; however, we needed to create separate categories to allow statistical analysis.

Using a data equity approach, we opted to categorize people who chose more than one racial/ethnic category within the group having the lowest numbers in Oregon. For example, someone who identified as both *African American (AA)/Black* and *Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI)* would be categorized as *AN/AI*.

To include all respondents in analysis, we created a category (*Any Other* race/ethnicity) that combines responses for those who identified as *AN/AI*, *Native Hawaiian* or *Pacific Islander*, or whose racial/ethnic identity was not listed. Though imperfect, this method was identified as the most appropriate by WERL members. It was further informed by recommendations from the Coalition of Communities of Color, which consulted with us during this process.

FIGURE 1. Race/ethnicity of home visitors (n=487).

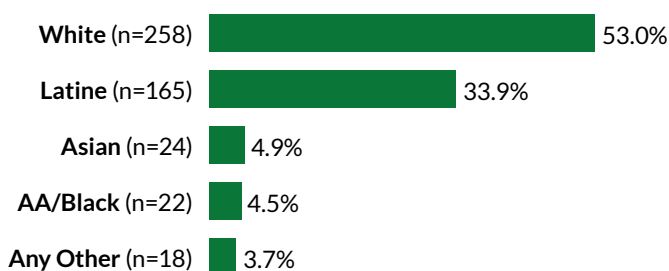


Figure 1 shows the racial/ethnic backgrounds of home visitors. Figure 2 shows the number who speak Spanish, other languages, or only English at home. *More complete information on language and racial/ethnic identity appears in the Appendix.*

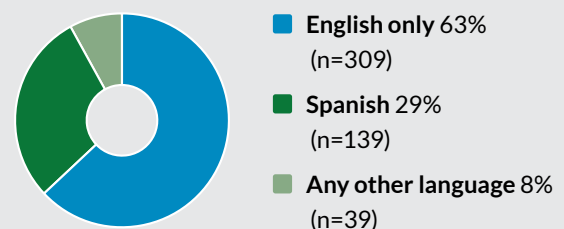
To better understand our findings, our analysis included data on home visitors' education level and length of employment in their current position (see *Figures 3 & 4*).

Survey Questions & Outcome Measures

We looked at a variety of measures of pay and benefits for home visitors, including:

- Hourly rate
- Total number of available benefits
- How adequate these benefits were to meet their individual and family needs (“fully adequate,” “somewhat adequate” or “not at all adequate”)
- Whether they have enough time off for holidays and vacations (rated on a 5-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”)
- Whether paid time off included holidays the home visitor celebrates (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*).

FIGURE 2. Language spoken at home (n=487)



A 5-point scale measured perceived support for professional development. For example, home visitors rated how much they agreed or disagreed with items such as “the training that is provided to me helps me to improve my skills” and “my program provides funding for the professional development opportunities that help me reach my goals.”

Finally, we looked at two supports specifically for home visitors of color and home visitors whose home language is not English. For home visitors of color, we asked how often they meet with other staff who identify as “belonging to a racially or ethnically marginalized community for shared peer learning and support,” and whether these opportunities were “too often,” “about the right amount” or “not often enough.”

For home visitors who speak Spanish or any other non-English language at home, we also asked whether trainings were provided to them in whatever language they were most comfortable speaking.

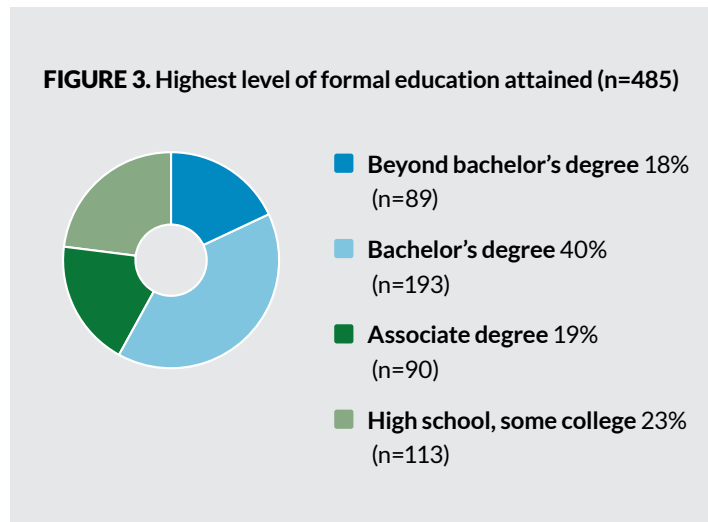
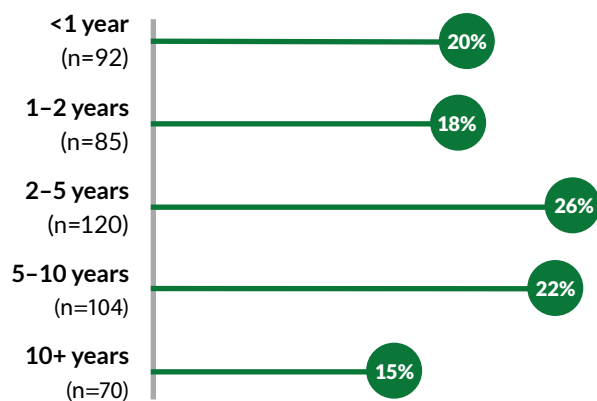


FIGURE 4. Number of years working in current position (n=471).



Survey Methods

The survey link was sent in July 2023 to staff emails from program model and agency contact lists and key early childhood networks (e.g., Early Learning Hubs, program model distribution lists and Oregon Health Authority’s home visiting newsletter). The survey was sent to roughly 1,300 home visitors in Oregon as well as 300 supervisors, agency staff and program directors. It was completed by 756 home visiting staff:

- 134 (19%) program managers
- 86 supervisors (12%)
- 494 (69%) staff who provide home visiting services only

All study participants received a \$50 gift card. Respondents represented more than 20 specific home visiting program models serving families in every Oregon county:

- Babies First
- Black Parent Initiative
- Community Education Worker
- CaCoon
- Early Childhood Equity Fund Home Visiting
- Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Home Visiting
- Early Head Start Home Visiting
- Expectant Moms
- Family Connects Oregon
- Family Spirit
- Family Support and Connections
- Head Start Home Visiting
- Healthy Birth Initiative
- Healthy Families Oregon
- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
- In-Home Safety & Reunification Services
- Latino Network Home Visiting
- Maternity Case Management
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Parents as Teachers
- Parent Child Development Service
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy
- Relief Nursery
- Todos Juntos Home Visiting

See *Learning Brief 2* for more information.

Key Study Outcomes

Worker Pay

Oregon home visitors reported an average hourly wage of \$18.67 (n=433) after taxes. However, those with nondominant racial/ethnic backgrounds had significant pay disparities even after accounting for differences in education and length of time in their current position (see Figures 5 & 6).

Workers who speak Spanish at home earned lower pay (\$17.71) than those who speak English only (\$18.89) or any other language (\$20.03). Latine workers earned an average of \$17.27 per hour, significantly less than those identifying as *Asian* (\$19.93); *White* (\$19.44); *Any Other* racial/ethnic group (\$18.87); or *African American/Black* (\$18.55).

This disparity seems to exist *only* for home visitors; we saw no significant difference when comparing Latine program managers and supervisors to those identifying only as White, again controlling for education and time in position.

FIGURE 5. Pay disparities for home visitors by language.

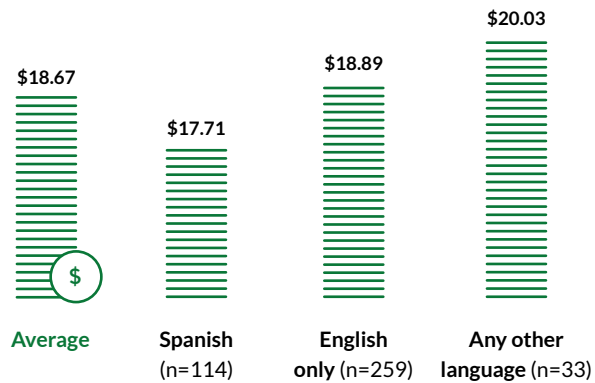
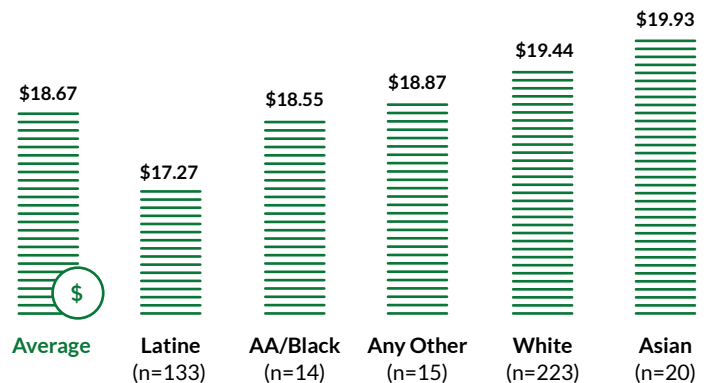


FIGURE 6. Pay disparities for home visitors by race/ethnicity.



“Necesitamos mejores salarios. Es un trabajo muy necesario por que la comunidad necesita mucha ayuda, pero los trabajadores se van por que es un trabajo muy mal remunerado.”

— Visitante a domicilio

“We need better salaries. It is work that is very necessary because the community needs a lot of help, but the workers leave because it is a job that is very poorly paid.”

— Home visitor



“Health insurance for my family is way too expensive. ... It would take too much of my paycheck to pay for and also pay bills. As an RN, that's a huge disappointment to me.”

— Home visitor

Employment Benefits

To understand the benefits home visitors receive, we asked about 13 common benefits such as health insurance and paid time off. On average, home visitors reported that their organizations provided about 10.7 of these benefits. Those identifying as *White*, *Latine* or *Any Other* race/ethnicity had slightly more available benefits (10.6 to 11.0), compared to those identifying as *Asian* (9.8) or *African American/Black* (9.7). The most commonly provided benefits were:

- Health insurance (97%)
- Dental insurance (96%)
- Travel reimbursement (95%)

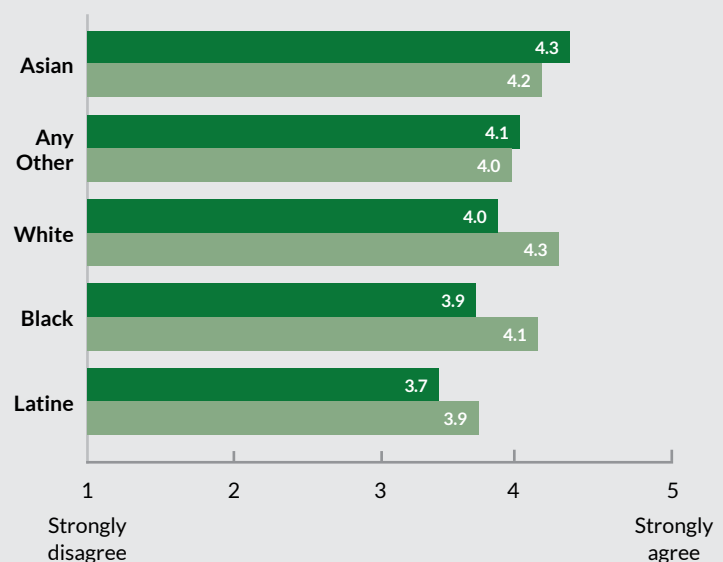
Although home visitors described these benefits as “somewhat adequate” (32%, n=152) or “fully adequate” (68%, n=321) to meet their needs, qualitative data suggested that many struggled with the costs of adding family members to their insurance plans.

Vacation & Time Off

Most home visitors receive paid sick days (95%) and paid personal and/or vacation days (94%), and they are mostly satisfied with their amount of vacation and other time off. However, home visitors of color reported significant differences in their level of satisfaction (see *Figure 7, right*).

Latine home visitors were the least likely to report feeling like they have enough time off *and* the least likely to have time off for holidays they celebrate. However, home visitors identifying as *Asian* or as *Any Other* race/ethnicity reported high levels of satisfaction in these areas.

FIGURE 7. Home visitors’ level of satisfaction with their amount of:
 ● time off/vacation | ● time off for holidays they celebrate





Support for Professional Development

On average, home visitors “agreed” (51%) or “strongly agreed” (34%) that they feel supported by their program to engage in professional development. *Asian* and *White* home visitors reported the highest levels support; *African American/Black*, *Latine* and respondents identifying as *Any Other* racial/ethnic group felt somewhat less supported.



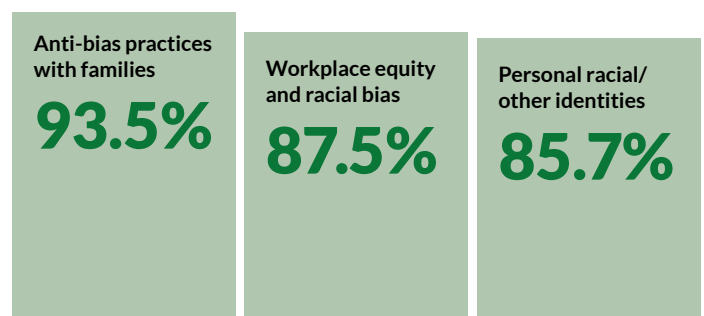
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Trainings

We asked home visitors if they had participated in any of the following types of professional training in the past year:

- Understanding and using anti-bias practices with families
- Strengthening racial equity and reducing racial bias in the workplace
- Understanding their own racial and other identities, privileges and positionality

Most home visitors reported participating in one or more such trainings (see *Figure 8, below*). Those who identified as *White* or *Any Other* racial/ethnic group were most likely to have participated. Most participants felt the trainings were “somewhat useful” (36%, n=138) to “very useful” (62%, n=240).

FIGURE 8. Percentage of home visitors participating in specific types of diversity, equity and inclusion trainings (n=388)



Supports for Languages Other Than English

One-third of home visiting workers who participated in this survey reported speaking a language other than English at home (34%, n=178). Of these, most speak Spanish (78%, n=139). However, these workers were less likely than those speaking only English to report receiving training in their own language (see Figure 9, right).

Further, 16% (n=27) of workers speaking a home language other than English reported that they did not feel they could speak that language at work without “discomfort or fear of backlash.”

Affinity Groups & Peer Support

We asked home visitors of color how frequently they met with co-workers who identified as “belonging to a racially/ethnically marginalized community for peer shared learning and support.”

Of the 155 respondents, almost half (47%, n=74) reported that these meetings took place “not often enough.” Overall, 1 in 4 (25%, n=43) of these home visitors reported having these opportunities “rarely or never” (see Figure 10, right).

FIGURE 9. Percentage of home visitors receiving training in their home language (n=467)

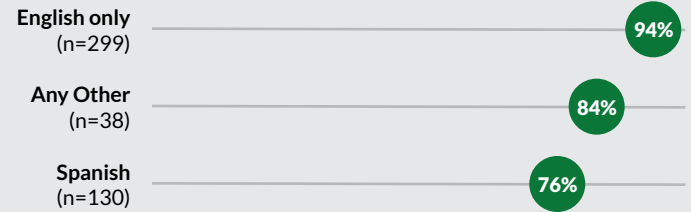
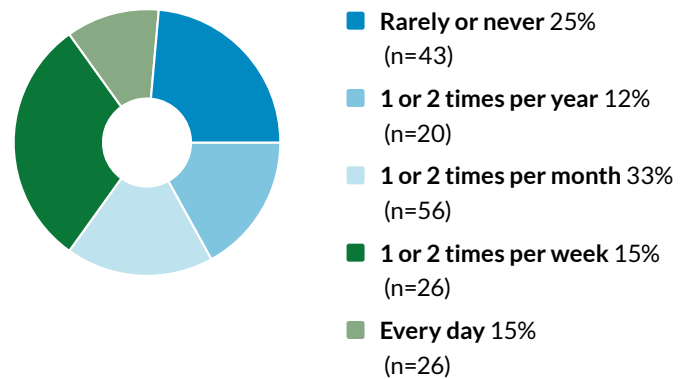


FIGURE 10. How frequently home visitors of color are able to meet with other staff who share their racial/ethnic identity for shared learning and support



Recommendations & Takeaways

Home visitor pay is strikingly low: only about 18.67 per hour. With Oregon’s minimum wage ranging from \$13.20 to \$15.45, many home visitors are making little more than this for their highly skilled and demanding work. Moreover, this survey found that over two-thirds of home visitors (72%) report high levels of financial stress.

Perhaps even more striking, we found clear pay disparities relating to home visitors’ racial/ethnic identities, which are not explained by differences in education or experience.

Pay inequity must be addressed through policy efforts to support consistency and equity in wages and with work that evaluates why critically important Latine workers are being paid less than their peers.

“My current job does not support me getting access to enough food and safe, affordable housing. And my job is to help others achieve that.”

— Home visitor

For example, these differences could be linked to the type of programs or organizations they work for; some program models may be more likely to hire Latine workers but also more likely to pay less than other programs. Further analysis will be needed to better understand the intersection of cross-model pay equity and race/ethnicity (see *Learning Brief 2: Pay, Benefits and Professional Development Opportunities for Home Visitors: Differences by Program Model and Geographic Region*). However, it is important to note that implicit bias in hiring and wages is a known workforce issue that has been demonstrated in other contexts;^{2,3} there is little reason to believe these unconscious biases are not also at play within home visiting program administration.

A common mantra within home visiting programs is their need and desire to hire and retain more home

visitors who speak Spanish and other non-English languages and who are bicultural across a range of racial/ethnic communities. Strategies to incentivize these community members to become home visitors — such as a higher pay differential or an increased rate for speaking other languages — could be more widespread and equitably implemented. Many home visitors of color bring other lived experiences, such as being immigrants or refugees, or having roots and family connections with these communities. These experiences and connections add value above and beyond academic training, and pay rates should reflect this. Our WERL members prioritized the following action recommendations:

- **Consistent policies for pay increases** for bilingual and bicultural staff across agencies and programs
- **A state-mandated pay increase** for bilingual staff
- **Equitable pay rates that account for lived experience and nondegree training** as well as — or in place of — credentials.

In terms of professional development, **there is a clear need for more Spanish-language training to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking home visitors.** The nuances of language, even for staff who may also speak English, are often lost when trainings are translated or when translation has to be navigated in real time by those whose home language is not English. Given the importance of effective training and professional development, language equity must be recognized as an element of effective workforce support. Workers of color can also be supported with more opportunities to meet with other workers who share their racial/cultural identities for peer support; such affinity group spaces could be provided virtually in or across programs.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Wilcox, C., Franko, M., & Roberts, A. (2019). *Region X advancing racial equity brief*. Butler Institute for Families, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/RegionXRacialEquityBrief.pdf>
- 2 Bornstein, S. (2022). Confronting the racial pay gap. *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 75(5), 1401–1460. <https://vanderbiltlawreview.org/lawreview/wp-content/uploads/sites/278/2022/10/Confronting-the-Racial-Pay-Gap.pdf>
- 3 Lean In. (n.d.). *Latinas aren't paid fairly—and that's just the tip of the iceberg*. <https://leanin.org/data-about-the-gender-pay-gap-for-latinas#:~:text=Latinas%20are%20paid%20less%20than,26%25%20less%20than%20white%20women>

APPENDIX A. Detailed Race, Ethnicity & Language Information for Home Visitor Respondents

Table 1. Racial & Ethnic Information for Home Visitors

RACE/ETHNICITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
American Indian & Alaska Native	13	2.6%
American Indian	11	2.2%
Alaska Native	**	**
Indigenous Mexican, Central American or South American	**	**
Not listed American Indian/Alaska Native	**	**
Asian	30	6.1%
Chinese	6	1.2%
Filipino/a	5	1.0%
Japanese	7	1.4%
Karen	**	**
Asian Indian	**	**
Communities of Myanmar	**	**
Hmong	**	**
Korean	**	**
Vietnamese	**	**
Not listed Indigenous Asian (please specify)	**	**
Not listed South Asian (please specify)	**	**
Not listed Southeast Asian (please specify)	**	**
Black & African American	24	4.9%
African American	18	3.6%
Somali	**	**
Not listed African (please specify)	**	**
Not listed Black (please specify)	**	**
Latino/a/e	170	34.7%
Central American	22	4.5%
Mexican	138	27.9%
South American	10	2.0%
Not listed	8	1.6%
Middle Eastern/North African	5	1.0%
Middle Eastern	5	1.0%
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander	9	1.8%
Communities of the Micronesian Region	**	**
Native Hawaiian	**	**
Samoan	**	**
Not listed Pacific Islander (please specify)	**	**
White	284	58.0%
Eastern European	66	13.0%
Slavic	25	5.1%
Western European	176	35.6%
Caucasian	**	**
Not listed White or Unknown (please specify)	**	**

Table 2. Languages Spoken at Home by Home Visitors

LANGUAGES SPOKEN	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
English	434	89.1%
Russian	6	1.2%
Spanish	145	29.8%
Not Listed	24	4.9%
Cantonese	**	**
Mandarin	**	**
Vietnamese	**	**
Arabic	**	**
Karen	**	**

Notes

1. ** indicates that fewer than five respondents chose this racial/ethnic category; these responses are masked to protect confidentiality.
2. Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to "choose all that apply."
3. American Indian and Alaska Native respondents include representatives from the following tribes:
 - Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
 - Cherokee Nation
 - Chickasaw Nation
 - Choctaw Nation
 - Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
 - Delaware Tribe of Indians
 - Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
 - Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
 - Northern Arapaho Tribe
 - Pamunkey Native Tribe

Contact

For more information about this study, please contact Beth Green: beth.green@pdx.edu

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